A social network analysis of student retention using archival data

Abstract

This study attempts to determine if a relationship exists between first-to-second-year retention and social network variables for a cohort of first-year students at a small liberal arts college. The social network is reconstructed using not survey data as is most common, but rather using archival data from a student information system. Each student is given a retention score and an attrition score based on the behavior of their immediate relationships in the network. Those scores are then entered into a logistic regression that includes tradition background and performance variables that are traditionally significantly related to retention. Students' friends' retention and attrition behaviors are found to have a greater impact on retention that any background or performance variable.